

APRIL 1990: NECKER ISLAND, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Exhausted, Diana had arranged it so that she had no more engagements until the end of April 1990. She had also arranged another trip to Necker, once again through the generosity of Richard Branson. For her it was the perfect escape and she was buoyant with excitement at the thought of spending time with her sons away from the Prince. What she had not foreseen, however, was that her decision to take a pre-Easter break on the island, once again without her husband, would send Fleet Street into frenzy. It became headline news.

Charles was blamed, even though it was Diana who had arranged the solo holiday. He chose instead to spend the time in the Scottish Highlands, thereby accidentally emphasising the gulf between the couple. The tabloids unfairly lambasted him as a bad father. One headline screamed: 'This Is Your Father – He's Hardly Seen the Boys Since Xmas', while a second read: 'Another Holiday Apart! They'll Be Forgetting What Dad Looks Like'. The accompanying articles

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labelled the Prince an absent father and reported that he had seen his sons for only two days in the previous two months. (In fact, it was three days.)

For this visit to Necker, Diana had decided to play Cupid to her brother, then still Viscount Althorp, and his wife of a few months, Victoria, inviting them both along for a surprise second honeymoon. Once again, William and Harry, her mother, Frances Shand Kydd, and sisters, Lady Sarah McCorquodale and Jane Fellowes, with their children, also joined her at the hideaway. I headed up the security team alone, for although Graham Smith was in the seventeen-strong party, he was there this time as the Princess's guest. She knew that he was seriously ill, and hoped that the sun and relaxation might help his recovery. It was good for me to have Graham around, too, because I knew that this year the paparazzi were determined to win their prized pictures. With so much speculation in the British press about the holiday before we left, there was not the remotest chance of keeping this trip a secret.

Within hours of our arrival the press and paparazzi were back. A small armada appeared on the horizon, with more than sixty journalists and photographers packed into chartered boats of all shapes and sizes, cameras primed and at the ready. Diana was almost incandescent with rage. 'How did they know we were here?' she demanded, before adding bitterly, 'Someone must have told them.' When I suggested that it would not have taken much to work out as the Princess was known to have a penchant for exotic islands in the Caribbean (especially if her holidays there were gratis), she flashed me one of her stony stares – she was not in any mood to see the funny side.

The presence of the journalists and paparazzi, albeit offshore, irritated her and the rest of the party enormously. No matter how much I urged them to try to put it out of their minds, assuring them that I would make sure that it would not affect their security,

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the Princess became obsessed with the problem. She kept saying, not very helpfully, that I should 'do something' about it. She also insisted that the media were frightening her sons. I was not at all surprised for she had filled the young Princes' heads with a great deal of nonsense about the press, telling them that they were all 'bad, bad men', with the result that the boys' reaction to journalists and photographers was all too predictable. (Diana was not altogether straight in this. She would later maintain a friendship with the *Daily Mail* journalist Richard Kay, and it was she herself who secretly selected Andrew Morton, once a royal correspondent on the *Daily Star*, to write the book that would, in the end, help her to escape from her marriage.)

I weighed up the odds. There were three other protection officers and myself against the crack troops of the world's press. Even Custer had better odds than this, I thought. There was also Graham Smith – and although he was a sick man and was not there officially, I took the lead from him. He and I agreed that we had to be proactive. The media knew exactly where we were, and since they weren't going to go away until they got what they wanted, we had to try and strike a deal, or pack up and abandon the holiday altogether.

Once again, Diana had not brought any staff with her and so without the luxury of a private secretary or a press secretary, it was left for me to deal with the problem. Until then, no one had really ever had to face such a situation before. In the past, Royal holidays had either been taken within the almost fortress-like Royal estates, like Sandringham or Balmoral, or as the guests of foreign royalty, as when the Prince and Princess had stayed in Mallorca. A combination of the large numbers of encroaching journalists and photographers, the absence of any effective means of deterring them, the Princess's ill-humour about the whole business, and my own desire not to see the holiday cut short, meant that I was going to have to act as some sort of press liaison officer.

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I could have told the Princess that this was really not my problem. She had decided to come to this island for a holiday; she knew perfectly well that she was always going to be open to press intrusion wherever she went and whatever she did. I might have added that my job was simply to ensure her safety, and that although the presence of the media was an irritation, it did not present a major breach of security but I did not. After talking over the situation with Graham Smith, I decided to arrange to meet some of the senior Fleet Street journalists to see if, between us, we could broker a deal in a bid not only to restrain the more intrusive hacks, but to clip the wings of the rogue elements among the foreign paparazzi, who tended to be a law unto themselves.

There is a piece of received wisdom in my line of work that, in effect, states that to ensure effective protection, information is essential. If I was to find out what the paparazzi were doing, I needed to secure allies from Fleet Street. The professionals tended to be more reasonable because, unlike the freelance photographers, their pay cheques were assured whether they got the pictures of Diana or not (unless they were fired for failing, of course). They wanted the scoop for reasons of professional pride as much as from a desire to beat the competition; in other words, they were not motivated by money alone.

With this in mind I climbed into a small boat with Dave Sharp and sailed out to where most of the press boats were. I spotted James Whitaker's rotund frame and pulled up alongside. As I looked out at the gathered photographers and reporters, many with sun-reddened faces and ample bellies, binoculars slung around their necks, I couldn't help smiling. They reminded me of *Sun* reporter Harry Arnold's apt description of the Royal Rat Pack when he wryly told Prince Charles, 'We may be scum, sir, but we are *la crème de la scum*.'

We sailed in among them, and by a mixture of yells and gestures

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I signalled that I wanted them to meet me at Biras Creek on Virgin Gorda, about fifteen minutes away by motor boat. Sensing a deal, Whitaker, who always tended to assume the mantle of commander-in-chief of the Rat Pack, gave the order for the rest to follow. Settled in a calypso bar, cocktails or beers distributed to everyone, we talked over and around the situation. I knew that I was in dangerous territory here. Technically, dealing with the press was well beyond my remit, and doing so could cause problems for me with my superior officers back at Scotland Yard. Yet in the end I felt I had no choice. I made it clear to the gaggle of hacks and photographers that the Princess was there on a private holiday and was under no obligation to give a photo opportunity just because the media happened to be intruding on her privacy. To sweeten the pill, I told them a few minor details about the holiday, without giving too much away. The senior journalists there – Whitaker, Kent Gavin and Arthur Edwards – sat quietly surrounded by the rest, listening to what I had to say. There was a moment's silence after I delivered my 'leave-us-alone' speech before James Whitaker gave his response.

James's bark was worse than his bite. The 'Red Tomato', as the Princess had dubbed him after seeing him packed tightly into a red ski-suit as he tried to give chase on a Royal holiday in the Alps, adopted the mantle of spokesman-in-chief. With a manner somewhere between that of a retired colonel from the heyday of the British Raj and a female pantomime character played by a man in drag, he put the case for the indefensible. Mercifully, he spared me any 'freedom-of-the-press-and-public-interest' cant, adopting instead a more realistic approach.

'Ken,' he rasped portentously, 'we have a bloody job to do, and if we work together we can make everybody's job, including yours, a damned sight easier!' I knew he had a point, although I kept quiet. 'If you could just persuade the Princess to go along with the idea of

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a photocall, she would get a peaceful holiday, you would not have to worry about security and we would have the editors off our backs, get the snaps and go fishing.' Everyone, including Dave Sharp and I, burst out laughing but James silenced us all with a glare.

He went on to point out that the genuine newspaper journalists and photographers were the least of my problems, as the real concern was the foreign paparazzi. I knew that it was true.

Daily Mirror photographer Kent Gavin, or 'Idle Jack' as he was known, 'Widow Twankey' Whitaker's pantomime partner-in-crime, was the quiet one of the team. Unlike James, however, whose loud protestations usually went over people's heads, when Gavin spoke he commanded respect from his peers. The Princess knew and liked him; indeed, he had even been invited to photograph Prince William's christening in 1982 (and in 1996, the year before the Princess was killed, he was voted Royal Photographer of the Decade). He loved the good life and covering Royal holidays, as well as official events, was an important part of his professional jet-set life. For once, Gavin backed Whitaker, pressing home the point that the Fleet Street journalists were not really the problem. 'Tell the Princess she looks a million dollars, and I'll make sure the pictures of her in the *Daily Mirror* do her justice. She'll knock 'em dead back home.' Kent Gavin understood that the real impact of the Princess upon the public was in pictures of her. He also knew that she was vain, and that the idea of appearing on the front pages, showing off her beautiful and bronzed body, would secretly appeal to her.

For my part, I realised that the key to any deal depended on the Fleet Street journalists' ability to deliver full co-operation from the paparazzi, the men who, in the slipperiness stakes, make the most active eel look positively inert. Nevertheless, the Fleet Street teams did wield significant power over the paparazzi back then, since it was their editors who would pay the big cash for any pictures the freelancers got if they ignored a deal and struck out on their own.

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Additionally, the paparazzi were not stupid, and knew that it was better to secure a deal that got them some pictures than risk getting absolutely nothing at all.

With some satisfaction, I noted that as Dave Sharp and I left the bar the Royal Rat Pack were locked in discussion with their French, Italian and German rivals. It puts the UN into perspective, I thought, as I glimpsed a red-faced Whitaker berating some unfortunate French photographer who had dared to challenge his authority.

On the journey back to Necker I mentally weighed up how I was going to win Diana's support for a deal with the media. I knew I would need allies, notably Diana's brother, Charles Spencer, and Graham Smith, if I were to persuade her to co-operate. We might have found paradise, but I was well aware that if I failed to win over the Princess, then as far as she was concerned, mine would be a paradise lost. Graham supported me, as I had known he would; so too did Charles. He told the Princess that in his expert opinion we had no choice; we either negotiated a truce or it would be all-out war, and the local police simply did not have the resources to drive off fifty or sixty determined pressmen. Even with help from the guests, I and the two other protection officers would never be able to prevent some of our unwanted visitors from landing on the island and trying to get pictures of Diana and her sons; meanwhile, others out in the boats would come as far as they could inshore and snap her whenever she appeared. That was not intrusion, but full-scale invasion. As a clincher, Graham added his belief that if Diana did not agree, then we might have to decamp and either look for another holiday destination at very short notice and with no guarantee that the media would not find us again within a day or so, or return to Britain.

While the Princess was considering this, I explained that if we arranged one photocall there was a good chance that once they had got the pictures they had come for, the press would leave her and her family alone for the rest of the holiday.

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‘But can you guarantee it, Ken?’ she wanted to know. This, of course, was the question I least wanted to have to answer, and the crux of the whole problem. I had to admit that I could not, but that there was very little alternative. Unlike in the previous year, the local police could not provide the additional cover we needed to cope with the numbers of journalists and photographers homing in on the island. They were busy chasing drug dealers, and had already withdrawn the night boat patrol they had originally offered. This, coupled with the fact the year before I had dispensed with the services of the local night-time beach patrol after I had found the police team asleep over their rifles, meant that my security team was stretched well beyond its capabilities. There was nothing we could do to stop the press invading Necker at any moment, day or night. True, their mission was to take photographs, and they were therefore not life-threatening, but it would still have been hugely embarrassing if any of them had made it up to the house. It would also have driven the Princess, and probably some of her guests, into a paroxysm of fury, with who knew what consequences. The last thing we wanted was a PR disaster brought on by complaints from aggrieved journalists or photographers. As it was, the Princes William and Harry were already muttering darkly about exacting revenge on the intruders.

I explained to Diana that while I appreciated that she was on a private holiday and that she was entirely justified in complaining that her privacy was being shamefully invaded, we had to agree to the picture deal. I assured her that I would not allow any of the press to set foot on the island, and that she would not have to pose for the cameras in any way. I suggested that she should just go about her normal business on the beach with the two boys, and I would do my best to oversee the operation from a boat alongside the press boats offshore. Once again she immediately grasped our main problem.

‘But can they be trusted?’

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Of course, I had no way of knowing, but I tried to reassure her by saying that I felt the press could be relied on to deliver their side of the bargain, since it was in the interest of all parties for the deal to hold up. After a few minutes, and with a little gentle persuasion from her brother, Charles, for which I was extremely grateful, she agreed. I was almost certain that Kent Gavin was right, and that, deep down, she was quite looking forward to having pictures of herself, looking sensational in a swimsuit, splashed across the front pages of the world's press, but of course she was not going to let me know that.

I called Kent at once and told him the deal was on, adding, as ominously as I could, that if he or his colleagues broke it then I would never trust him or Fleet Street again. The laid-back photographer said that he would do his very best to deliver what he had promised and so at eleven the next morning I boarded a small boat and sailed out to the press launches moored offshore. On arrival the hacks and photographers were in fine form, jostling for the best position and joking with each other. They were obviously relieved that their expensive journey had not been wasted, and that their editors – and ultimately the public – were going to get the pictures and stories they wanted.

The paparazzi were grouped together on a smaller boat moored a few yards away. They were deathly quiet, acknowledging my arrival with a nod almost in unison. Unlike the Fleet Street crew they were not interested in glory or lavish picture by-lines on the front pages, they were in it just for the money. I repeated the rules of engagement and briefed them all about what was going to happen. I then bluntly refreshed their memories about the deal we had struck, pressing the point that after this photocall they would leave the Princess alone. Again there were a few nods, this time of agreement, but I knew that in trusting them, I was going out on a limb.

Within a few minutes the Princess and her family appeared on the beach. She looked sensational, and played her role to perfection. I had

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suggested that she should play with her sons on the beach, within sight of the cameras, but what followed surprised even me. Surrounded by her sons and their five cousins, she proceeded to let them bury her in the sand, laughing all the while. Then, having extricated herself, she threw off her sundress, revealing her bikini underneath, and raced William and Harry, then aged eight and five, down to the sea to rinse off the sand. Her body gleamed with water in the hot sun, and the camera shutters clicked in frenzy. It was, as ever, a masterly display by the consummate public-relations professional.

After about twenty minutes I called a halt to the photo shoot – if they hadn't got enough pictures by now, then they shouldn't be in the job. To a man, paparazzi included, they all stopped immediately, clearly elated at the photographs they had got. We fired up the boats' engines and headed for Biras Creek, where I told them in no uncertain terms that this was the end and that, no matter how much I normally loved seeing their smiling faces, I did not want to see any of them again on this trip.

All of them agreed that it had been a fantastic photocall, one of the best they had ever had. They gave me credit for it, but it was the Princess who had made it work. Once again I asked them to leave us alone. I was convinced that some would stick around, but most of them, mainly the British freelancers, would leave. But somehow I knew that the French, who never took no for an answer, would be back for more. James Whitaker left me decidedly sceptical as he led Fleet Street's chorus of approval.

'Never mind all that, James – just deliver your side of the deal,' I told him as I left.

Back home in Britain, the newspaper editors were delighted. Diana, looking absolutely wonderful, was splashed across the front pages of most newspapers, especially the tabloids. Under banner headlines, she sent her message back to her errant husband, who she suspected would have been enjoying secret trysts with his married lover, Camilla

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Parker Bowles, while she was far away on Necker. 'I'm here without you, and I'm having a wonderful time,' it might have read.

The photo shoot out of the way, Diana and her family could relax and enjoy themselves. The press did manage to miss one scoop, though. I remember a dramatic moment when Diana saved her mother's life during her first holiday on Necker Island in 1989. The banana boat they were all riding through the waves veered suddenly, throwing them all into the water. Everyone swam back to the vessel except Frances Shand Kydd, who we feared might be in difficulty. Diana and I spotted her simultaneously and the Princess dived in and pulled her to the surface. As I pushed her onto the vessel from the rear, Frances in typically Frances manner joked, 'Ken, will you please get your hand out of my c***!'

However happy the press and the Princess might have been, my superiors at Scotland Yard were furious. When I contacted Head Office by telephone, I was told that the photocall had caused quite a stir back in London, and that senior officers were not happy about my involvement, which had been reported in the press.

Senior management of the Metropolitan formally reminded me that my role was not that of a press officer, but a protection officer. This time it was my turn to be incensed. I told them in no uncertain terms that I would be sending them a full report of what had happened on Necker, in which I would explain exactly why I had acted as I had done (with, I might add, Graham Smith's full support). Warming to my theme, I added that I was looking forward to hearing exactly how the geniuses who sat behind their desks in Scotland Yard would have handled the situation, a situation for which there had not, until then, been any precedent. Finally, I reminded them that I had a difficult job to do there, and that I was getting zero assistance or guidance from London, either from Scotland Yard or Buckingham Palace. I then stormed off in indignation to have a cocktail – virgin, of course, since I was on

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duty – to calm myself down. It worked. As I watched a spectacular orange sunset sink below the horizon I could not help laughing out loud at the way the whole business had turned out.

To my astonishment, and to their credit, the deal with the press held up for the next three days. I think the Princess was surprised, too, because she changed her swimsuit every day, just in case she should be photographed again – she was never one knowingly to disappoint her public. She and her party suffered no press intrusion whatsoever, and I basked in the glory of having brought about this almost unthinkable state of affairs. Diana and her family were able to walk on the beach, swim and snorkel without a press boat in sight. At last she was able to unwind.

There was no daily plan of activities, but William and Harry looked to the men in the party to organise their day so while the Princess and the rest of the women lounged around the pool, watched over by Dave Sharp, I was tasked with keeping her two extremely active sons occupied. It was not an onerous task, not least because Richard Branson's island had everything in place to make this, for boys, the adventure holiday of a lifetime.

One of William's favourite games involved the children unleashing billiard balls across the snooker table at high speed in a bid to smash their opponents' fingers, almost the only rule being that the contestants had to leave their hands resting on the table's cushions until the ball was unleashed. I had to put a stop to this, as gently as I could. As a diversion, I took them snorkelling with their Uncle Charles, but this was not enough to beguile the inquisitive Prince William; he wanted to explore. So he and I hatched a plan to recce the island, and one morning set off together armed with knives, and with only bottled water, fruit and some sandwiches to sustain us. William could not contain his excitement as we ventured deep into the island's interior.

For the next three hours the boy destined to be King and I hacked our way through the undergrowth, climbed rocks and forded

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streams, re-enacting our own version of *Robinson Crusoe*. William loved every minute of it. At one point I began to worry as the midday sun beat down on us and I realised that I had lost my bearings. I kept this to myself, however, and eventually, albeit two hours later than I had anticipated, we made it back to the main house. William raced in, desperate to tell his mother every detail of his great adventure. Harry, too young to journey off into the island's jungle, had spent the time playing in the pool with his cousins.

Throughout the three-day truce I kept in daily touch with Kent Gavin by telephone. This was a way of briefing reporters, who had asked that I should let them know if anything untoward had happened to the Princess or any of her party that might constitute a legitimate story. I thought the tale of how the heir apparent had gone missing while exploring with his mother's police protection officer might make a good story, but for obvious reasons I said nothing.

I honoured my side of the bargain, though, allowing the journalists harmless snippets about what the Princess and her party had been doing, and repeated that I expected the media to keep theirs. On the third day after the photocall, however, Gavin warned me that something was afoot. He told me that Fleet Street could no longer be held responsible for the French paparazzi that he feared would soon be out in force again. At this my heart sank – I knew that the Princess would be furious if their peace was to be broken by the media once again. Gavin suggested that I should persuade her to do another photocall, which, he thought, would probably placate the ever-hungry paparazzi, but when I put the proposal of a second photocall to Diana she was predictably reluctant.

'You said that if I did the first one they would leave us alone, so why have I got to do another one?' she complained.

She had a point, but I reminded her that at least the deal I had struck had kept the press away for the last three days. I continued by saying that although many of the photographers had left the

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area, my information was that there were a few hardcore paparazzi preparing to invade her privacy once again. I then suggested that the best solution, however annoying, was for her to do a short, ten-minute photocall, at which point the deal would be reinstated – with any luck until the end of the holiday. After a few minutes' consideration she saw the logic of this and agreed, and the shoot went ahead the following day. She did not like being forced into a corner, but relaxed and beautifully tanned, she saw the advantages to both sides.

Yet even after this a few paparazzi determined to try to get something different. The rest of the press honoured the agreement and left the immediate area, but a handful of freelance photographers remained. They were, from a security viewpoint, considerably easier to handle than the original fifty or sixty, and I felt my decision to negotiate had been fully justified. But the young Princes in particular still wanted their revenge on the 'tographers', as seven-year-old William called them. It was not long before they got their wish.

Richard Branson's manager on the island, Dan Reid, had returned from one of his business and supply trips to Tortola armed with three giant handheld catapults and hundreds of balloons, which he gave to the children. I have no idea where he found them, but they proved a big hit with the Princes and their cousins. The catapults were huge. To fire the balloons, which for maximum effect would be filled with water to the size of cricket balls, the catapults had to be tied to posts or held by two people while a third loaded, aimed and fired the missile. Initially, they caused much hilarity as the children and the protection officers fought pitched mini-battles against each other. There was, however, one moment of slight anxiety when young Fellowes – son of Lady Jane and her husband, the Queen's private secretary, Sir Robert (now Lord) Fellowes – known as 'Beatle', received a direct hit in the chest when William launched an attack on him from the helicopter pad. Poor Beatle

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went down severely winded and was left with a huge bruise on his chest for the rest of the holiday. But after a brief cooling-off period, during which the Princess considered a complete ban on our war games, the balloon battles were allowed to continue. As the children perfected their warlike activities, William had a brainwave that he felt sure would get his mother's backing.

'Ken,' he said, his eyes lighting up with excitement, 'when the photographers come back in their boats, why don't we catapult them from the house?' There was a perfect vantage point; set upon rocks about eighty feet above the shoreline. William – whose ancestors had led troops into battle – was ready to get his revenge on the snoopers who had upset his beloved mother. Without me knowing he rallied his troops – Harry and their cousins – and they set about constructing two sites in readiness for the return of the press boats.

It didn't take me long to find out what they were up to. When I told the Princess what her sons were planning for the media she thought it was hilarious and approved it immediately. I was dispatched to supervise the battle plans, feeling rather like Captain Mainwaring from the British comedy *Dad's Army*, in charge of a unit of the Home Guard. I even adopted his catchphrases – 'Now gather round, everybody' and 'There's a war on, you know' when addressing my troops. Within hours, true to form, the press boats appeared on the horizon, which sent the children into a frenzy. 'Steady, lads,' I said, 'don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes.' It was not quite Britain in 1940, but to the two Princes it was just as vital to defend their post from invaders.

As boats carrying the hardcore paparazzi approached, I gave the children the order to unleash their stack of coloured water bombs. The unfortunate photographers did not know what had hit them, and after twenty minutes and several direct hits they retired hurt and did not return. To be fair, they had the good grace to see the funny side. For William, protecting his mother was a matter of personal

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pride, and he rushed back to tell her of his victory, very much a hero in her eyes.

Everyone was in high spirits. The Princess, revitalised by her holiday, wanted to bid farewell to Necker in style, and to that end arranged a lavish beach party. That night, clad in a diaphanous blue silk dress, she was in real party mood. As the reggae band, the Bitter End Steel Orchestra, played, she grabbed me, looked me straight in the eyes and ordered, 'Let's tango!'

As we swept away to the music of the steel band the rest of the party joined in. Diana's brother, Charles Spencer, had no choice but to follow our lead, being hauled onto the dance floor by his mother, Frances. Then, one after the other, Diana's sisters teamed up with the other detectives. Just to infuriate my Scotland Yard superiors even further, one of the band members sold the story of our last-night party to the *News of the World*. An article about our merrymaking appeared the following day, under the banner headline 'Di Tangos With Cop On Necker Island', and the accompanying text described me as a 'smoothie' who 'sees more of her than Charles'. For once, Diana joked when she saw the article from the now-defunct Sunday tabloid.

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The Princes William and Harry had been plaguing their parents to take them skiing. Harry in particular was desperate to learn and his father had promised to arrange it. To his frustration nothing ever materialised. It did not, however, stop the Prince from making his annual pilgrimage to the Swiss Alps and his favourite resort, Klosters. Charles, being a creature of habit, made it clear that he would do exactly what he wanted, and that if Diana did not care to join him then that was her prerogative. The Princess, however, had made it clear to her husband after the avalanche in Klosters that claimed the life of their friend and equerry, Major Hugh Lindsay, in 1988 that she would never return there.

Privately, Diana had determined that she would answer their sons' wish. Her good friend Catherine Soames, the former wife of Charles's long-time friend and Tory minister (and grandson of Sir Winston Churchill), Nicholas 'Bunter' Soames, suggested that the exclusive resort of Lech would be the perfect place for William and

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Harry to learn to ski and it would be a fun holiday for the Princess too. Thrilled, Diana asked Catherine to book it for her, oblivious to (or at least choosing to ignore) the security implications involved.

A few days later she broached the subject with me, knowing that security would be a potential nightmare, given the inevitable press attention her holiday would attract. I told her that I would have to check the resort out as such a visit could have serious security implications. Armed with little information apart from the name of the resort and the hotel she had picked, I made arrangements to travel to Austria.

I immediately made contact with the Chief of Police (protection) in Bludenz, Austria, and a pre-holiday recce was arranged. I then telephoned the Arlberg Hotel and spoke with the manager, Mr Hannes Schneider, but at this stage made no reference to Diana. After booking my flight, I headed for the Austrian mountains. Upon arrival by hire car from Zurich it was soon obvious to me that the location was perfect. The wooden chalets, the mountains dusted with snow and peppered with trees, and the people – protective, discreet and professional – made the ski resort of Lech an ideal royal retreat. For many years it had been the haunt of European and Middle Eastern royal families, but now it was about to be exposed to the ultimate test – Diana, Princess of Wales, one of the most famous and sought-after women in the world. I knew it would not take long for the foreign paparazzi to find us.

I had arranged to meet the Austrian police representatives at the hotel the day after my arrival. Schneider was a most impressive man, as was his entire family. The five-star hotel situated in prime position in the village was a picture postcard example of the very best of absolute skiing luxury. Once we had established the purpose of my visit, we examined the initial booking via Catherine Soames, which showed a request for two separate adult rooms and rooms for four children. At this stage no request had been made for a nanny,

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three protection officers, two police skiers from London, a night duty protection officer, and two Austrian liaison police skiers. With a beaming smile on his face Hannes Schneider ripped up the initial reservation and told me, 'I think it is best to start again. It really is no problem.'

'Mr No Problem' soon became his catchphrase and was synonymous with all future royal visits to Lech with Diana. The hotel hosted many European dignitaries and Herr Hannes Schneider was the perfect 'mine host', freely doling out top advice and making recommendations. In my experience he never made one bad recommendation. A section of the hotel was placed at my disposal to accommodate the entire party that worked perfectly.

'What about the snow, Hannes, can you guarantee that?' I asked.

'Only God can do that,' he observed. 'But the village is set at a modest altitude of 1,450 metres and each year we receive up to double the amount of snow of some of its French rivals.'

Hannes had an answer for everything, it seemed.

I then went to the local police station to inform the police of the dates for Diana's arrival. Before my departure I travelled to nearby Zurs as Lech shared its ski area with the smaller village. There I visited numerous restaurant chalets to take back as much information as possible for the Princess and her sons. Before leaving, I telephoned Diana and suggested we meet the following day to discuss the new arrangements.

Excited, she took a deep breath and sighed, then said, 'At last – I have done something for my boys on my own.'

I travelled back to London, really pleased with the arrangements and the prospect of discussing them with the Princess. I knew that this would be the skiing template for years to come, and so it proved to be. Back in London Diana invited me to her drawing room at Kensington Palace. We discussed the arrangements and were both excited at the plans made.

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Weeks later, on leaving Kensington Palace we travelled by car to London Heathrow, where I boarded a British Airways plane bound for Zurich with my two colleagues appointed to protect William and Harry. Arrangements via the consular office in Zurich ensured that my request for a twelve-seater mini bus be in position airside to meet the aircraft. On this occasion a representative from this office travelled with us from Zurich. All passport formalities were cleared via the consulate, and we left the airport escorted by police until the motorway. After that we continued on the two-hour journey escorted only by my police colleagues travelling behind a vehicle carrying the luggage.

A beaming Schneider family in traditional Austrian dress was waiting to greet us on arrival, a Royal greeting for sure. I could see Diana was blissfully happy as her excited sons ran into the hotel. The plethora of stuffed animals on the floors and walls of the hotel immediately transfixed the boys – Herr Schneider senior was a big game hunter and his trophies adorned the hotel walls. Harry spotted immediately a huge black bear on the floor and attempted to climb inside, much to the embarrassment of his mother, but this delighted the Schneiders, who immediately transferred the beast to his room.

With an indoor swimming pool at their disposal, Diana and the boys were quick to change. Herr Schneider had also made arrangements with the local ski school, Stroltz, to visit the hotel and fit them all with boots. Ski instructors were introduced, one for the two boys and one for Diana. With little snow, and it being their first skiing experience, William and Harry had no time to waste and with help from their instructor made for the nursery slopes accompanied by their protection policeman, Sergeant Dave Sharp.

Diana, in a reflective mood, requested a walk to the shops. Meanwhile the nanny – the late Olga Powell – organised the luggage and the unpacking. The Princess was content and with no press or

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paparazzi at this stage, it was a poignant moment. After a brilliant supper at the hotel the Royal party turned in. I briefed the night duty corridor officer who had travelled out in advance; an experienced police officer and a crucial cog in the overall security plan.

After breakfast the next day William and Harry left the hotel with their ski instructor for the nursery slopes. With little snow, Harry was frustrated and chose not to listen to the instructor. Clearly having watched too much *Ski Sunday*, he placed both arms and skis tightly under his body and skied off at speed, only to end up on his backside in a chalet garden, wedged against a small pine tree, having run out of snow and ended up skiing on mud.

Diana and friends Catherine Soames and Katie Menzies, with the instructor and two Scotland Yard trained skiers (also armed) headed for the Rüfikopf via a cable car to the mountain range above Lech and Zurs. Amazingly, by this stage the press had not caught us up. With radio contact, I set off to co-ordinate a lunch venue in Zurs.

William and Harry were quick to their beds following supper – rarely later than 8pm. Diana settled the boys with Nanny and then joined us in the bar before supper. The atmosphere was always very cordial, and the Princess was generous with her drinks to police and staff alike. The days that followed took a similar format, with lunch venues changing and different parts of the challenging Austrian Alps being skied by Diana and her party. One evening the entire group travelled by horse and sledge to the village of Klösterle – a typical Austrian log cabin restaurant. On the last evening of the holiday, Diana and Catherine Soames joined myself and some other police officers, including the Austrian Police, at the Tanburgerhoff Bar in Lech to thank us.

When we got back, Prince Charles didn't say anything but he was clearly put out that he had not introduced his sons to the sport he loved and Diana had stolen a march on him. Although a competent skier she was not in Charles's league. For her part, Diana basked in

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his irritation. The fact that he wanted to see the Princes William and Harry ski meant, figuratively speaking, that the mountain would have to come to Mohammed.

* * *

In March 1992, the following year, Charles agreed to make the effort and travel to Lech from Klosters to join his family. The Princess would have preferred him to stay away, but acutely aware that her sons would love to show off their new skills to their father, she agreed. It would be a momentous visit.

Tracking the Princess was like a military exercise to the papparazzi and a lucrative one at that; they were also extremely good at it. The fact that we had given them the slip the previous year, had annoyed them immensely. This time the Royal Rat Pack were determined they wouldn't be caught on the hop again. The British press was always pretty quick to react, too, but from my perspective they were easier to handle – the British newspaper reporters and photographers would always negotiate. For them, there was too much to lose if they overstepped the mark. But always there were a few photographers and journalists from the foreign press who simply did not care. You could make a deal with them and they would swear blind that they would honour it, but both you and they knew perfectly well that they never had any intention of doing so.

The doyen of royal watchers, James Whitaker, made his way towards me across the hard-packed snow. We had achieved 24 hours of press freedom up until this point. He looked as though he was about to explode, his complexion matching the bright red ski suit that he always wore on these occasions. Here was a man on a mission.

'How's the skiing, James – having fun?' I asked, in a bid to head him off at the pass.

'Well, as you've asked, Ken,' he replied, 'it's not all that good. I had to contend with solid ice in the morning, followed by slush after

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lunch. It was like skiing in a large vat of porridge.' Then, before I could even begin to feign sympathy for the lot of the royal reporter, he dropped his bombshell.

'I have some bloody serious news and I want you to be dead straight with me,' he said. His expression had become so austere that it was almost comical.

'Well, James, what on earth is it?' I said, trying not to be outdone in seriousness and sincerity. From my many dealings over the years with the Fleet Street legend, I knew that to him everything was always 'bloody serious'.

'It's the Princess's father, Ken – Earl Spencer. I have it on bloody good authority that he died last night,' he told me, before adding, 'You see my predicament, don't you? I need this confirmed before I go to press.'

If it were true, this was indeed 'bloody serious'. Worse still, James would insist on confirmation, and would make a considerable nuisance of himself until he got it. I paused for a moment, trying to maintain my composure, before offering what I hoped was a suitably evasive response.

'Well, if that really is the case, James, it's the first I've heard of it and I'm quite sure I would have been told,' I replied, trying to hide the feeling of panic creeping over me. I knew that if James's source was correct, then all hell was going to break loose. By now thoroughly anxious, I cut short our conversation, telling him that I would find out if he was right and assured him that I would get back to him as soon as possible.

With that, I returned to the hotel, where I telephoned the Princess's sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale, in England. It was not the easiest of questions to ask a daughter and I was dreading the response. If the report was true, however, I knew that we would have to act decisively. There was a great deal at stake, and I did not know how Diana would cope. Sarah, however, assured me that

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although her father was not in the best of health she had seen him recently and had left him sitting up in his hospital bed; she added that he had been in quite good spirits.

Relieved, I went back to James and assured him that the news of the Earl's death had been grossly exaggerated. But he shook his head knowingly and said, 'That's amazing, Ken, it came from a bloody good source. *Bloody* good.'

Yet within a day of our conversation Johnny, eighth Earl Spencer, the Princess's beloved father and a true gentleman, would be dead. And the ski resort of Lech in the Austrian Alps, where the Prince and Princess of Wales and their two sons were holidaying together that March of 1992 would become the setting for one of the most dramatic and difficult episodes in my career with royalty.

Until the point when the Prince arrived in Lech everything had been going so well. Every morning at around nine o'clock the Princess, in company with her friends, Katie Menzies and Catherine Soames, would go to breakfast in the main restaurant of their exquisite five-star hotel, the Arlberg. The owners, the Schneider family again, treated their royal guests perfectly, with complete discretion and just the right degree of deference. After a light breakfast the party would gather in the ski room of the hotel basement and prepare to face the press. The previous evening I had met the ringleaders of the eighty or so reporters, camera crews and photographers who had descended on the resort for the Royal holiday. Without a press officer on hand, I arranged a photocall of sorts at the foot of the main ski lift. From long experience we knew that the more experienced skiers among the media pack would give chase whatever we did, but I had to try and organise something to avoid the situation getting out of control. In reality I was fighting a losing battle. Some of the foreign photographers were indeed so accomplished they could ski backwards down the piste in front of the Princess with their lenses trained on the Royal party.

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Sometimes though, the press would back off and Diana would then disappear for the morning with her two girlfriends, a guide, an Austrian policeman and a trained skier from Scotland Yard before rejoining her sons for lunch in the mountains. As head of security for the trip I would remain at the hotel within radio contact. Occasionally I would join the Princess at one of her favoured haunts on the Mohnenfluh near Oberlech, a refuge about two hundred metres above the village, where the skiers would devour Austrian fare and the odd glühwein. Diana would ski for another hour or so after lunch, but by mid-afternoon the warm spring weather made conditions slushy and difficult, so she would return to the hotel for a sauna and a swim before getting ready for supper.

During my recce in 1991, I had met Cliff Richard, and the former BBC Radio 1 DJ Mike Read, with their friend, businessman Charles Haswell and his wife Susie, who had invited me to join them for dinner. They too were returning the following year that coincidentally was the same week Diana was to return. One evening Cliff and others of his party met with the Princess in the bar of the hotel. The singer suggested a musical evening to Diana. It was agreed that on the following Sunday he would sing in her suite. Circumstances would unfold that prevented it, however.

The peace was broken by the announcement that Prince Charles and his entourage would be arriving the following night, although what happened next proved in the end to be the comic relief before the storm. The Prince arrived late after snowdrifts blocked the Arlberg Pass, the only route into the village. Diana had made it clear that her husband would not be welcome in her private suite, and his personal arrangements had to be made through Hannes Schneider if he wanted rooms in the Arlberg for himself and his entourage. I arranged his accommodation after consultation with his protection officer.

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Members of the Royal Family expect everything to be perfect, down to the tiniest detail, so when the Prince arrived late that night, he immediately asked for his favourite drink, a stiff dry Martini, but when he went to his room he noticed there wasn't a refrigerator. At once he called in his policeman, Inspector Tony Parker, and pointed out that despite it being the dead of night he needed a fridge and he needed it now. Enter 'Herr No Problem' Hannes, the son and heir of 'Old Man Schneider', as the Arlberg's owner was universally known.

'No refrigerator, no problem,' he replied in his slightly high-pitched, heavily accented English – even though there was not a spare one in the entire hotel. Twenty minutes later, I saw, through a window, Hannes strolling purposefully through the snow with a mini-refrigerator on his back. I have no idea where he had got it, but to the Schneider family when a prince wants a refrigerator, no matter how inconvenient, a refrigerator he gets.

The rest of the stay in Lech was not so entertaining; indeed, it turned out to be an ordeal. Once more fate intervened. As it panned out, Charles never skied in Lech that year, nor since, for on 29 March 1992 James Whitaker's grim prophecy was realised. The Princess's father, Lord Spencer, died at the Brompton Hospital in South Kensington after years of ill health.

Before her husband's arrival the Princess had been completely relaxed, as well as determined to have fun. As mentioned earlier I had even arranged for another guest at the hotel, the British pop singer Sir Cliff Richard, to give a private concert for her. Cliff, an evergreen legend, who has had No. 1 hits in Britain in each of the last five decades, knew Diana was in the hotel and thought it would be fun to perform for her. As a result, his friend, DJ Mike Read, approached me and asked if I could arrange it. I told the Princess, who agreed that it would be a great idea. In the event, the concert up in her suite never happened, for the news came through that

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her father had died. It was a time that was to test those around Diana and the Prince to the very limit, quite apart from the strain it placed upon the Princess herself and her two sons. For me, the tightrope that advisers have to walk between a royal couple's public and private lives was rarely so slippery as when Diana learned of her father's death.

On the afternoon of the 29th I received a telephone call from Diana's sister, Sarah. She was understandably distraught. Just twenty-four hours earlier, she and I had laughed off reports of her father's death. Now it had become a sad reality. By this time the Prince was fully installed at the Arlberg with his entourage, consisting of his private secretary, Commander Richard Aylard, and his part-time press secretary, Philip Mackie, dubbed the 'Silly Ghillie' by the media. Armed with the news, I immediately went to Aylard so that he could formally tell the Prince and ask if he wanted to break the news to his wife. I assumed that on being told, Prince Charles would want to tell the Princess, but to my surprise I was asked to see him.

It was decided by all present that as I knew Diana best, the news would be better coming from me. But I felt that it should be her husband who told her – I reasoned that the situation was difficult enough without me adding to its complications. Even so, I could not help but think these circumstances were in contrast to the touching moment in Kenya when Charles's father, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh – a man so often accused of insensitivity – broke the news to the then Princess Elizabeth that her father, King George VI, had died. The two of them had wandered through the grounds as the young Queen contemplated the enormity of her loss, and how it was going to change her life forever. As Charles's aides were very anxious about the Princess's reaction, I thought that the only thing to do was to be exactly what I was – a policeman. If I could not take control in a moment of personal crisis, then who on earth could? Charles knew that his wife would be inconsolable over

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her father's death, and he was equally aware that he would bear the brunt of her grief and frustration. Eventually, it was agreed that I would break the news.

As I made my way to Diana's suite I could not help reflecting that this was something I really did not want to do. True, the breaking of tragic news is part of a police officer's duty, but in most cases the officer involved does not know the people he has to tell. Diana was my principal, but I had also grown to respect and admire her. This was going to be one of the worst duties I could undertake for her.

As gently as I could, I broke the news to the Princess. She was calm at first – she had not expected it and was not prepared for such bad news. But before too long her eyes filled and tears began to stream down her face.

'Oh my God, Ken... Oh my God! What am I to do?' she sobbed, over and over again.

My heart went out to her. I sat beside her on the end of her bed, feeling helpless. Then I put my arms around her, trying in vain to comfort her in her terrible distress. In that moment she looked like a lost little girl who suddenly realises she is completely alone in the world.

After a while I tentatively broached the subject of what we had to do next. As delicately as I could, I introduced the subject of the Prince. In an atmosphere you could have cut with a knife, she proceeded to make it abundantly clear that she wanted to return to her dead father and her family as soon as possible, and most definitely alone. Under no circumstances, she said, did she want the Prince to accompany her.

'I mean it, Ken. I don't want him with me. He doesn't love me – he loves that woman. Why should I help save his face? Why the bloody hell should I? It's *my* father who has gone. It's a bit bloody late for Charles to start playing the caring husband, don't you think?' she said, every word coming straight from the heart.

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Foreseeing trouble, I returned to the Prince and his staff, leaving my number two, Sergeant Dave Sharp, with Diana.

By this stage in their relationship there was absolutely no dialogue between the Prince and Princess. I was therefore not so much a conduit as the last resort. To make matters worse, Diana bluntly refused to speak to Richard Aylard because he was the Prince's right-hand man, and as far as she was concerned, public enemy number one, the chief supporter in Charles's camp. Nevertheless, I passed on the bad news to Aylard. The blood seemed to drain from his already pale face as he instantly anticipated the Prince's reaction. Seconds later, Charles emerged from his suite, clearly still in shock. He was, of course, concerned for his wife, himself and his two children.

In this extremely unhappy situation I decided to take control.

'I am going to put my police officer's hat on, sir. This is a very difficult and delicate situation. How do you think we should handle it?'

But the Prince seemed by now to have come to a decision. I was left in no doubt that the task of getting the Princess back to Britain in a reasonable state and in company with her husband would be my responsibility.

Again I was asked to reason with her, on the grounds that I knew the Princess so well. There was little I could do about it, and therefore I promised to return to Diana's suite, adding that I would do my best. As I left, I turned and told the Prince that I could make no guarantees. He, meanwhile, telephoned HM The Queen, who was at Windsor Castle, to break the news that the Earl, a former equerry both to her and to her late father, King George VI, had passed away.

I was extremely apprehensive as I made my way back to Diana's suite, fully aware that there was a lot riding on this next conversation. If she decided to throw a hysterical fit and refuse her husband's

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request – and she was quite capable of doing so – we would be back to square one. Moreover the press, who would soon begin to mass outside the hotel, would have a field day. Lord Spencer's death was a major news story, and if the Prince and Princess did not return to Britain together then nothing, not even compassion for the grief-stricken Diana, would stop the press from going for the jugular. The truth about the Waleses would be immediately and blindingly obvious to the most naive journalist. I made my decision in the light of all this. Returning to the Princess's room, I told her bluntly that this was not a matter for debate.

'Ma'am, you have to go back with the Prince. This one is not open for discussion, you just have to go with it.'

At once her tears began to flow again. I tried to comfort her. We talked about how I had lost my father, Frank, and that, like her, I had not managed to get back in time to speak to him. Death, I assured her, was part of life. And as she continued to weep, I told her that we all have to go on for our families' sake, as well as our own.

'Ma'am, your father would not have wanted this. He was a loyal man, he would not have wanted his death turned into a media circus, would he?'

I don't know what it was that struck a chord, but something did. Her mood changed. She became calmer, and began to listen to reason.

'Okay, Ken, I'll do it. Tell him I'll do it, but it is for my father, not for him – it is out of loyalty to my father,' she told me.

Perhaps it was the word 'loyalty' that had made all the difference, but whatever it was, the Princess was back on level ground. I had done the Prince's bidding, and on the face of it, at least, a potentially damaging situation had been averted. Diplomacy, common sense and Diana's own sense of pride had won the day.

Back I went to the Prince's quarters, where I told Richard Aylard

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that she had relented and agreed to travel back with the Prince. There was a palpable sense of relief all round. It was only then that Aylard and the 'Silly Ghillie' headed off to the Monzabon Hotel, opposite the Arlberg, where they had asked the media to assemble for the daily briefing.

While I sat at the foot of the Princess's bed, trying to comfort her, Aylard and Mackie broke the news to the press. It was around 7pm local time, which meant that it was 6pm in London, and nobody there knew that the Princess's father had died earlier that day. At the Monzabon the press had all turned up to hear what the Royal party had been doing that day and to make sure that none of them had been injured. So when Aylard told the gathered media the news, it was greeted with a respectful silence until the veteran *Sun* photographer, Arthur Edwards, asked the crucial question: 'Richard, has this gone out on the Press Association wires?'

Both Richard Aylard and Philip Mackie looked blankly at each other for a second before replying in unison, 'No!'

At that moment all hell broke loose. There was a mass exodus of the press and photographers, as if war had been declared or the three-minute warning for a nuclear strike had been sounded. Journalists, photographers, camera crews and anchormen were literally climbing over one another as they raced for the phones so they could tell their respective editors before the first editions went to bed, or the next news bulletins went out. Some of the journalists, perhaps understandably, did not really trouble themselves too much about the other guests as they shouted their stories down the phone for the next hour or so.

The Princess refused to talk to anyone, and gave me strict instructions that no one else, particularly her husband or members of his party, would be welcome in her suite. Charles, however, appeared unmoved by his wife's directive. Instead, he went outside to play snowballs with his two sons, in the care of their detectives

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and nanny Olga Powell, where he gently broke the news to them that their grandfather was dead. Despite their sadness, the boys took it well. This was their first real experience of death, and the Prince, a sensitive and caring father, did his best to console them. There was nothing he could do to help the grief-stricken Princess, though.

For the next three hours I sat on the end of Diana's bed as her emotions raged. One minute she was lucid, in touch with reality, accepting of the situation. At other times she was angry at the world, shouting and screaming as the tears streamed down her face. She wanted to fly back immediately but given how late it was, a Royal Flight could not be arranged until the following morning. I could do nothing but try to calm her, telling her that it was only sensible to wait for morning.

'It makes sense, Ma'am,' I kept saying. 'Trust me on this one, it is the right thing to do.'

The Prince of Wales is undeniably a good man, and I speak as someone who has known him at close quarters. His is a sensitive, caring, even spiritual character. Furthermore, his treatment of his wife during their marriage was in some ways understandable. As much as I liked and admired her, she could be an extremely difficult woman, and it is axiomatic – indeed, almost a cliché – that when relationships or marriages crumble there are always two sides to every story.

We left Lech by car for Zurich Airport the following morning. It was a gloriously crisp day, with a beautiful clear blue sky and wonderful powder snow sprinkled on the slopes like a thick covering of icing sugar over a cake. The Prince, always a passionate skier, had never been to Lech before, and as it turned out would not return. Tony Parker, Charles's personal protection officer on this trip, was driving, with me sitting in the passenger seat alongside him. Charles sat in the back seat, next to his wife. William and Harry remained in Lech with their nanny and detectives.

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The tension in the car was electric. I looked in the mirror in time to see the Princess's eyes rise heavenwards in a gesture of the purest exasperation at comments made by the Prince. There was an icy silence for the rest of the two-hour journey.

At the airport we boarded the BAe146 of the Queen's Flight that was waiting for us, while the media, who were out in force, scribbled notes and the photographers' flashguns fired. Nothing was said during the entire flight. The Princess did not want to speak to her husband and he, fearing a furious or even hysterical outburst, did not dare chance trying to start a conversation. Whatever the discomforts of the journey, however, it was soon clear that the PR spin had worked. The next day it was reported that Prince Charles was at Diana's side in her hour of need. Yet as soon as the Prince and Princess arrived at Kensington Palace they went their separate ways – he to Highgrove and she to pay her last respects to her father.

I accompanied the Princess and her sisters when they went to see their father's body at the Chapel of Rest at Kenyon's, the funeral directors in Notting Hill, London. When we arrived, Diana, who by now had become much calmer, asked me if I too wanted to pay my respects to the late Earl. I demurred, saying that I thought that this was a supremely private moment, and one that belonged to the Spencer family, and to them alone. Diana smiled, then turned and joined Lady Sarah and Lady Jane inside the funeral directors' premises.

I had met Lord Spencer on a number of occasions. He was an extremely courteous man, very much an English aristocrat of the old school. Despite claims in the media of rifts between them, he always enjoyed a close relationship with his youngest daughter, Diana. As a father he was very attentive, and was always conscious of the needs of his children. It was perhaps inevitable that there would be conflicts with his children over his second wife, Raine,

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Countess Spencer, but he never let those differences come between him and Diana.

Sadly, the same could not be said of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. On the day of the Earl's funeral, two days later, the atmosphere between the Royal couple had deteriorated yet further. Diana resembled nothing so much as a volcano that might erupt at any second. If she did, I thought, we would never get her back – the full force of her fury, grief and frustration would break upon everyone around her, and no one would be able to control the effects. Certainly everyone, including the Queen, was very concerned about how the Princess would cope during the funeral. They knew she was highly strung, and were fearful of the repercussions.

That morning I drove the Princess to Althorp, the Spencers' family seat in Northamptonshire, for the funeral. The Prince also attended, against his wife's wishes, arriving by helicopter. It was an intensely sad day for her, and Diana and I did not speak much on the journey, but when she did talk, she kept returning to the same theme: 'He's going to turn my father's funeral into a charade,' she complained. 'It's so false.'

'Well, Ma'am, just don't let him,' I responded. My heart went out to her, and I felt helpless that I could do so little to ease her grief.

The Spencer family as a whole also did not want the Prince to attend, but in the event Diana's brother, Charles, the new Earl Spencer, persuaded his sister to relent. The press, however, noted that the Prince was not there to comfort Diana on the long journey to Althorp. Although her husband was at the funeral in person, it was clear from the Princess's body language that she was alone.

Lord Spencer was cremated after a quiet, private family service. Afterwards the Princess was handed the urn containing the late Earl's ashes and we returned to the Spencer family vault inside the church at Great Brington, just outside the estate walls. All the

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late Earl's children were there, family feuds at last forgotten as they made their final farewells. Then a great stone was lifted and I joined the Princess in the vault, surrounded by the remains of her ancestors, with a candle as our only light. There were cobwebs all around us, and the air was pervaded by a pungent dusty smell. With tears in her eyes, Diana said a prayer; then she too said her final farewell.

It seems hard to comprehend that, just over five years later, Diana herself would make her last journey too, returning to Althorp in her coffin, mourned by millions around the world.

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